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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000203

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SUBJECT: DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS: UN RAPPORTEUR IN TOKYO

Classified By: CDA James P. Zumwalt for Reasons 1.4b, d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The human rights situation in the DPRK is grim and worsening, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on DPRK human rights. The specter of famine looms again for eight million people, with the WFP only able to feed about one third of that number. There are reports that the government is cracking down on the market liberalization experiments that began appearing in 2002, such as kitchen gardens, and small-scale markets. Reports of collective punishment for the families of perceived enemies of the regime continue. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) In a preview of his forthcoming report to the UNGA on the human rights situation in North Korea, Vitit Muntarbhorn, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in North Korea, told Charge James Zumwalt that the situation in the DPRK is dire: some eight million people face starvation, there have been reports of increased crackdowns on markets, and there is a continuing outflow of people, the majority of whom now are women. The report will cover four areas: food, personal freedom, asylum issues, and special groups.

3, (C) Muntarbhorn is basing his report on interviews with North Korean refugees, and authorities and experts in Japan and the ROK. He said that although the DPRK's harvest improved from last year, it is still below expectations, due to some extent to a lack of fertilizer. As a result the WFP reports that eight million people, mostly in the non-rice bowl areas, are in danger of famine, while the WFP only has enough resources to feed 1.8 to 1.9 million people. The groups most affected will be women, especially nursing mothers, children, the elderly, and the disabled.

¶4. (C) Muntarbhorn stated that there is a need for an improved food distribution monitoring system. In response to the criticisms by some Japanese NGOs that food aid was being diverted to the elites and the military, Muntarbhorn said that he stresses to critics the humanitarian aspect of the aid: that the people who are already the main victims of the DPRK regime should not be made to suffer further. He also pointed out that the type of food offered, such as fortified biscuits, was not the type sought after by the ruling elite. Muntarbhorn said one focus of his report would be on the need to put people's livelihood and well-being ahead of the military, with a more equitable distribution of resources.

¶5. (C) Muntarbhorn said that another main focus of the report would be on "food security," namely encouraging the DPRK to better use its own resources. For example kitchen gardens and small-scale markets are the best way to increase food supply quickly, he said. However, he also pointed out that the

government is clamping down on the market activities and kitchen gardens that began as "liberalization experiments" in 2002. Women below a certain age are also being prohibited from trading. The crackdown is both to drive people back to the government stores, as well as because of a fear on the part of the government that it will not be able to control people's economic activities.

16. (C) Muntarbhorn stated that the overall number of refugees from the DPRK was down both because of the DPRK's own efforts and because of the responses of its neighbors. The majority of people now fleeing the DPRK are women. Most are smuggled out, but some appear to have been trafficked. Moreover, those women who have taken the longest to reach South Korea, often by circuitous routes, have also been the ones to most often find themselves in trafficking situations. As a result, in comparison to those who were quickly able to find a way to South Korea, the group that took the longest to reach the ROK, tend to be the most traumatized.

17. (C) Muntarbhorn stated his understanding of the importance Japan places on the abductee issue and said while in Japan, in addition to the family's of the abductees, he visited the sites of two abductions in Niigata. In talks with the Japanese government, he urged them to adopt a humanitarian approach to the DPRK. He also called on the authorities here to be prepared to respond positively to asylum requests from North Koreans, and not just those who have a tie to Japan.

18. (C) Muntarbhorn concluded that the human rights situation in the DPRK is "grim." Public executions, including of young

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people continue; prison conditions are "appalling;" persecution of religions believers continues, particularly of those with contacts with foreign religious groups; and raids on houses continue, both to seize cell phones and to check that radios and TVs are still set to the preset government stations.

ZUMWALT